

6-1999

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Recommended Citation

(1999) "Matheson's Mission: Paducah Junior College, 1936-1968," *Jackson Purchase Historical Society*. Vol. 26 : No. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/jphs/vol26/iss1/10>

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Matheson's Mission: Paducah Junior College, 1936-1968

John Robertson

In Paducah and much of Kentucky Dr. Robert Gordon Matheson was "the Dean." A pioneer in the junior college movement, Dr. Matheson was more than an educator. He was a dedicated leader in his church, community, and Commonwealth. His death, December 15, 1991, at age ninety-one, marked the end of an era. The funeral at Paducah's First Presbyterian Church would have pleased Matheson. A large crowd gathered to celebrate the life of the Dean. The service was solemn; the sermon was profound. Two hearses led the Matheson cortege to the cemetery. As Marshall Nemer, a veteran member of the Paducah Junior College Board of Trustees, recalled, "He was a wonderful educator with a keen sense of humor. He will be sorely missed."¹

Matheson was a native of Gate City, Virginia, but grew up in South Carolina. He never lost his soft Southern accent. In 1918, Matheson qualified for entry into the officer training program for the United States Army held at Plattsburg, New York. Because of a technical error concerning his age (he was not yet eighteen), Matheson served only forty-seven days. At college there he contracted the Spanish Influenza. The authorities sent him home on a bus on indefinite leave. When he arrived, no one met Matheson. Luck delivered the young man to the automobile of Dr. H. B. Stewart, the family physician, just before Matheson collapsed and passed out on the street. He woke up at the home of his father, a minister, and surprised everyone by surviving.

Matheson attended Presbyterian College in South Carolina, where he "was sophomore class president, a student council member for four years, college newspaper editor and assistant

editor of the school's yearbook. He also ran cross-country and played shortstop on the baseball team." The latter experience led to eight summers of semi-professional baseball and earned him the nickname "Christy," after the great New York Giants pitcher, and gave Matheson great pleasure to his dying day.²

Matheson graduated from Presbyterian College in 1921 with a bachelor's degree in English with a heavy concentration in mathematics. While a senior, Matheson taught chemistry at Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, South Carolina. Matheson never lost his keen interest in teaching and insisted on offering at least one class each semester to the end of his career. In fact, in 1976 the last class in psychology he taught to nursing students at Paducah Community College asked the Dean to extend the session for an additional week. What greater tribute could an educator ask?³

After graduating from Presbyterian College, Matheson taught English at Virginia Polytechnical Institute from 1928 to 1929 and also completed the work for a master's degree at the University of South Carolina. From there, he moved to Presbyterian Junior College in Maxton, North Carolina, where he served as dean for three years and as president for two years. Matheson returned to Presbyterian College in 1932, serving as an assistant to the president for two years before moving to Bailey Military Academy in Greenwood, South Carolina, in 1935, where he was the commandant of the corps of cadets.⁴ While there, Matheson learned of an administrative position at the new college in Paducah.

Paducah Junior College began as a private school in December of 1932 in the old YMCA building at 707 Broadway with

seven faculty and sixty-eight students, including eight sophomores. U.R. Bell, a minister, served as the first president. The institution came into being to fill a void. A study by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company had revealed that Paducah had one of the lowest college matriculation rates of any city of 30,000 in the nation. Schultz Riggs, the district representative of the Metropolitan, met with various local leaders over coffee at Boswell's Restaurant in the Palmer House Hotel. The result was a committee that agreed to offer two years of college training in Paducah despite that fact that the Great Depression was at its worst with a twenty-five percent unemployment rate putting fifteen million people out of work nationally. The initial tuition was higher than that of the University of Kentucky. Many of the faculty, well-qualified and experienced, came from bread lines in Chicago and elsewhere. While meager, the pay at PJC was better than nothing. Paducah had high hopes for an elite two-year college.⁵

An early member of the faculty recalled,

One of the unusual things about Paducah Junior College as a private college was the size of its graduating classes. They never included more than eight students....There were usually twenty-six people in the commencement recessional: eight students, eight faculty members, and ten board members.⁶

The enrollment never met expectations; therefore, revenue continually proved to be deficient. Faculty were paid in scrip for a period. The Board decided it could not afford President Bell as he did not teach. Bell was told and resigned as of June 1, 1934. He was not replaced, and Goveriel Rosenthal, head

of the Board, and Dr. Stanley Reeves, the academic dean, filled the void.

Local tax support was critical if the school was to survive. The process to change from private to public started in 1934 when the trustees approached the city. Before the city could comply, a state law was necessary. Henry Ward of Paducah introduced such a bill in 1934, and it became Public Law 165.160, authorizing second class cities to acquire or establish junior colleges for higher education. Public Law 165.170 empowered second-class cities with the power to levy a tax of not less than five and not more than seven cents on each one hundred dollars of property. There was sufficient opposition from a member of the board and the community to initiate efforts to put the issue of revoking the tax on the ballot for November, 1936. The situation was compounded further by the resignation of Reeves and other faculty.

In 1936 Robert Gordon Matheson learned of the opening for an administrator at the college at Paducah and knew the institution was in crises. Matheson remembered, "I couldn't get a job in the summer...so I thought my time was worth more than sixty cents a day." Matheson figured that was what he would clear picking peaches after deducting costs of transportation and lunch. "So I went back for additional graduate work [at Peabody in Nashville to study with Dr. Doak Campbell] especially in junior college administration." Another factor that convinced Matheson to go to Peabody was that "Doak Campbell at that time was the Secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges. He was on the inside of the whole movement." It was there that Matheson heard of an opening in Paducah.

Matheson asked Professor Campbell for his advice. "I might say that I [stopped by Nashville] on my way to talk to the board of trustees up there," recalled Matheson. Campbell told Matheson that it would be "o.k." to take the job if he wanted something to do but warned him to insist on a local tax base to assure funding for the college. Matheson told him that "I was willing to ring door bells for two years. If that didn't work, then [I would] quit." Matheson accepted the position of chief administrative officer at Paducah Junior College on April 1, 1936. Since he did not complete his doctorate until 1954, the title originally given Matheson was Dean. In 1946 the Board of Trustees named Matheson the second president of the school.⁷

The college in Paducah was in dire straits when Matheson arrived. The faculty had dropped to six, including the Dean, and the enrollment consisted of only twenty-six students.⁸ A stable source of funding had to be assured or the venture was doomed. Tuition had dropped to \$37.50 per semester with an additional one-time registration fee of five dollars for the year. This fee system produced a budget of only \$11,000. Furthermore, the remaining faculty were owed \$1,800 each. Dean Matheson agreed to canvass the city door to door encouraging retention of the city's PJC property tax levied in 1934. This encouragement was vital as powerful forces in the city openly opposed the idea of an additional property tax when there were so many unable to pay the present rates. The Dean had made passage of the measure a condition for his remaining at Paducah and had informed the Board of Trustees that he would resign if the measure did not pass.

The election in November was further confused by the

wording of the ballot. A vote of "no" meant to accept the tax. This was carefully explained to the more affluent West End, but no organized effort was made to educate other sections of the city. Strangely enough, despite the fact that Kentucky law specifically denied blacks entry into the new school, Dr. D. H. Anderson, head of West Kentucky Vocational School, urged blacks to back the effort, which they did. Of the 8,317 Paducahans voting, 4,223 voted against repealing the tax. Dean Matheson got his support by a slim majority.⁹

The next year, enrollment rose to seventy-four and continued to grow until the school was forced to move westward because of the influx of veterans after World War II. Matheson had to be flexible to survive. He, his faculty, and students shared janitorial chores such as sweeping floors. The physical plant was an old home that had previously served the YMCA. It did have the only Olympic-sized indoor swimming pool west of Louisville, which proved to be both asset and trial. Times were so hard that the Dean figured that he could save money by going to the school about 3:00 a.m. to fill the pool as the city was pumping water from its treatment plant to the holding tank in the West End at that time. This ploy assured a higher concentration of chlorine and helped reduce expenses.¹⁰

Matheson proved flexible by finding ways to meet the needs of his students. The college did receive aid from two New Deal federal agencies and had a modified work-study program in place prior to Matheson's appointment as president. A morning and an afternoon section of the same class allowed students to work part-time for half a day and go to school for half a day with two students filling one position at a local factory. Matheson

insisted on a classical curriculum to maintain the accreditation under the aegis of the University of Kentucky through parallel course offerings. However, from the beginning, the Dean was willing to tailor the curriculum to the community needs. A two-year program allowed teachers in elementary schools to receive certification. Other career two-year programs would follow over the years.

From the beginning, PJC participated in intercollegiate athletics. Competition between the school and the University of Tennessee Junior College at Martin began with swimming meets and expanded to include both track, field, and rifle competition. With the latter, PJC broke a social barrier that had remained solid in most schools. The Paducah rifle team was coed:

The final innovation was shoulder-to-shoulder rifle matches. A lot of people had rifle teams but they were telegraphic....We stood side by side and shot. We...had five man teams...[and] went strictly by what they had done in practice a week prior to going to the match. When [the fourth or fifth place shooter did poorly] we would take a girl...from Reidland who would shoot on the boy's team.11

No sooner had PJC begun to pick up momentum under Matheson than the worst flood in recorded history hit the Ohio Valley. There had been other floods, each becoming progressively more severe. Still, Paducah viewed itself as being high and dry. The 1937 event caught the city by surprise. Matheson recalled that "everybody said...we already have had the biggest flood we can ever have [in 1913]. So, just sit back and enjoy it."12

As the rising waters approached the record 1913 mark with accelerating speed, Matheson recalled, "I was at the Ritz Hotel

[located at 2201 Broadway or 22 blocks from the river] for a banquet." In the span of time needed for the banquet, the flood rose so rapidly that when Matheson started to drive back toward town,

I choked down in front of the Tabernacle Baptist Church[12th and Jefferson] and a taxi driver pushed me through. I was able to get the car started and took it home. I'm very proud of myself. I went into my back yard to a great big pile of ashes there four or five feet high and drove my car right up on[top.]

There the car rested until the end of the flood.¹³

Paducah Community College at 707 Broadway was one of the highest points in the city. Still, the flood could not be denied: "We had an eight o'clock class the morning after this downpour. There were thirty students in a college algebra class. Only six of them made it. We had no more classes. That was the last until after the flood."¹⁴ Classes were suspended on January 22. No final examinations were given, but the Dean had the faculty assign grades based on what the student had accomplished up to that date. This pattern was used later during World War II to accommodate students who were called up for military service prior to the end of a term. Often, instead of giving a semester credit, it was necessary to give only quarter credit. Still, the student was not penalized.¹⁵

Even though classes were cancelled, the building was in no immediate danger. Seventh Street was a natural levee, so Matheson could walk from his house at 304 North Seventh to the college and not get his feet wet: "One morning after classes had been dismissed when I got there it was full of refugees.

It was the highest spot and they had come to the highest spot. We still had lights, by the way." A pump in the basement held the water at bay at that time, but the water was obviously gaining. "I could see that was not going to last," said Matheson. "As a matter of fact, while I was there I saw some water coming across the top of the grate bed. I knew. So I told them that I was going to pull the fire and I might as well cut off the pump." The records of the school were put in a burlap bag and tied to a fixture on the third floor and the office equipment was also moved up on the upper floors. Refugees moved onto the second floor where grates still were operational and vowed to remain. The city had cut the water supply off earlier when the flood got to the pumping stations. Later, the Army forced the evacuation of the city for health reasons. When they left, the refugees accidentally left a water tap open on the third floor. The city was still under quarantine when the city water was turned back on at midnight, and the Dean was not allowed to enter the city until 8:00 a.m. As a result, the major damage to the facility was not from the flood but from negligence.

Registration for the spring term of 1937 did not begin until March 15 after the building had been inspected by the County Health Inspector. Matheson personally saw to it that the furnace was not a risk. Many natural gas furnaces in the city blew up when first lit, but the one at PJC had been carefully tended by the Dean so that it dried slowly. In fact, Matheson went into the city illegally at times just prior to the reopening of the city and lit a small coke fire to dry out the furnace, an illegal act after February 5. As a result the Dean

had to stay overnight on several occasions to avoid the military patrols. He also built a small wall of brick in front of the firebox to shield the light from anyone passing. The extra effort paid off. The furnace was not damaged.

Matheson and the Board insisted that the 1937 spring term contain a full eighteen weeks. As a result, final examinations were held the first week in July, and commencement was on July 4. 16

The flood made everyone in Paducah feel grateful that the experience had not been worse. As it turned out, the flood proved beneficial to the college in one respect--the college began offering classes in the evenings to accommodate students: "In the fall of 1937, sixteen students enrolled for the first eight-week period. Classes offered were mechanical drawing, speech, French, and business. These classes were taught on Tuesday and Thursday." The mixture between "practical" and "classic" was a part of the philosophy of the Dean to meet total community educational needs, not just offer the first two years of a college-bound curriculum. In this, the Dean anticipated the community college concept.

With assistance from the National Youth Administration, the college also began a work scholarship program. Students performed routine clerical and janitorial duties at a wage of twenty-five cents per hour up to fifteen dollars a month. Howard Hill was the first student to benefit from this program.¹⁷

A Commerce Department had been envisioned by the founders, but it remained for Matheson to implement it:

Draughton's Business College had been in

Paducah since 1901, but its program was strictly terminal. Credits earned at the Business School could not be transferred to other colleges and universities. Business and industry were demanding more trained help. The college, in providing the new courses, had a two-fold purpose: first, to provide efficient help for local businesses; second, give Paducah residents an opportunity to complete the first two years of a Business major at home before transferring to a senior college or university.¹⁸

The commencement for 1937 saw PJC becoming the tenth college in the nation to award an Associate in Arts degree to graduates under the blanket accreditation PJC then enjoyed from the University of Kentucky. This was not in complete accord with standards of the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges, of which the University was a member.¹⁹

Dean Matheson was not satisfied with the blanket accreditation under the University of Kentucky curriculum. By October 31, 1937, Paducah Junior College received membership in the Kentucky Association of Colleges, Secondary and Elementary Schools. This recognition was announced in the Bulletin for 1936-37 on page 10. While not a regional accrediting body, the organization did engender prestige for its members as they maintained high standards. Full membership in the regional body remained the goal of Matheson; however, World War II intervened.²⁰

Matheson introduced a series of new courses to meet the growing effort to prepare for war, including geopolitics, war economics, rifle marksmanship, first aid, and home nursing.²¹ The pool at PJC made it easier for the college to land a V-1 reserve program from the Navy. Men between eighteen and twenty

could enlist and stay in school at their own expense until they completed their second year. By 1942, the college had reserve programs from the Army, Army Air Force, and the Navy. Matheson had been qualified to teach as an instructor in calisthenics since World War I, so,

I taught the swimming and I taught the calisthenics and the obstacle courses and all sorts of contact games. Each one of the services required a one-hour-a-day, five-day-a-week [drill in P.E.]. It was good for me. We got a reserve program from each one of the services. They guaranteed people that they would not be called until the end of the semester.²²

To meet the increasing demands of the community, Matheson inaugurated summer school at PJC. The first sessions began June 4, 1942, and cost \$4.00 per semester hour or \$32.50 for a full load. Twenty-eight students attended for this term.²³

The first mid-term graduates took their diplomas in 1943. Seven students who had attended night school or summer classes were involved.²⁴ The college was fortunate to have a pool of trained, experienced educators and members of various professions who were willing to share their expertise as part-time faculty. The quality of night courses was quite high.

Some of the services did not honor their pledge to allow students to complete two full years, however, so Matheson arranged to give a quarter-hour of credit to each student who completed twelve weeks of the term. The call-up of reservists began just after Thanksgiving Day in 1943. By the end of the year only two students were male. Matheson himself took a commission in the Navy and reported for service in 1943. By

October, Matheson was at Columbia University in New York as a Naval officer. After training there, he was assigned to command a naval training unit at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Matheson did not return to work at PJC until the summer of 1946. His military rank at that time was Lieutenant Commander.²⁵

As World War II progressed, it became problematical whether the college would survive. Athletics had to be cancelled for the duration as the men disappeared from the halls of PJC. Further, the Arrowhead, or yearbook, and various Bulletin Announcements ceased to be published, and night school classes were discontinued. The faculty dwindled to four. However, the college ended the war with a cash surplus for the first time in its existence: \$18,000 in the bank. Better times were in the offing by 1946, when Matheson returned.²⁶

The Paducah Sun-Democrat for September 16, 1945, carried a full page of photographs of a visit by President Harry Truman, Senator Alben Barkley, and other dignitaries. Truman was enroute from Washington to Kansas City. Perhaps something was needed to fill out the lower right-hand corner of the page. Two drawings were shown: one illustrated a proposed city Memorial Auditorium, and the second was that of a proposed Paducah Junior College to be located between Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth on Washington. A War Memorial fund raised hope that the college might expand. To that end, the PJC Alumni pledged \$5,000 on November 19, 1945. Plans included a new structure that could accommodate between 250 and 300 students. An auditorium, tennis courts, and a baseball park were to be located behind the brick structure trimmed with four white stone columns rising two stories high at the entrance.²⁷

The college set a record enrollment of 150 students on September 15, 1946. This trend continued until the facility at 707 Broadway could no longer cope. The 1,000th student, veteran Hoyt Hawkins, enrolled at PJC on January 25, 1947. The boom was on. Shortly afterwards, the college suffered a grievous loss--Govriel Rosenthal, the great patron of the college during its early years, died October 14, 1947. Rosenthal, while not an academician, shared in the direct leadership of the college with the person in the office of Dean. Rosenthal had served on the PJC Board for seventeen years.²⁸

A bit of luck came to Matheson and the college when the Magnavox Company offered to sell to the college property valued at \$475,000 for only one dollar. The company continued to occupy the plant, and the college was to receive \$3,500 per year for ten years. The timing was vital as the enrollment reached another peak with 165 recorded on September 18, 1949. ²⁹

But, according to G. A. Murrell,

on September 12, 1949, Joseph S. Freeland, attorney for the local branch of the NAACP, accompanied Henry Lee Powell to the college. Upon their arrival there, they were conducted to the Dean's office, where Powell presented a transcript from Lincoln High School in Paducah and asked to be allowed to register as a student.

Matheson refused to admit Powell, not on the basis of his race, but on his poor academic achievement. This tactic avoided the mandate of the Kentucky statute prohibiting teaching blacks and whites in the same schools. Freeland and Powell left, but the incident was not closed.³⁰

Freeland returned the following day with a new candidate for admission to Paducah Junior College, Fred A. Wilson, Jr. Dean Matheson examined the transcript and found no cause to deny admission on the basis of academic deficiencies. Under the law, only one recourse was possible: admission was denied on the basis of race. That act became the focus of an effort to change the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and those of the United States regarding segregation. The case progressed through the federal courts to the Sixth District Court of Appeals and was in line for further consideration by the Supreme Court at the time it chose to test the issue with Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. During progress through the courts, various institutions in Kentucky, starting with the University of Louisville, decided to admit blacks rather than wait for an order to do so.³¹

Freeland received assistance in the preparation of his case against the college from NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Funds, Incorporated, and that included the advice of Thurgood Marshall and Robert Carter. The NAACP was particularly interested as other blacks had recently applied for admission to the University of Louisville, which also enjoyed municipal tax support. Matheson recalled that the college "was singled out because it was a municipal college and there were no facilities equivalent" in western Kentucky since the college level courses previously offered at West Kentucky Industrial College had been moved to Frankfort in 1937. As a result, the only publicly supported source of undergraduate higher education for blacks was Kentucky State College in Frankfort. The doctrine of "separate but equal" was not maintained.³²

The case was scheduled to be heard in federal court at Paducah on July 20, 1950, but was postponed as Matheson was on vacation at the time. Judge Roy Shelbourne ordered a continuance. In the meantime, Shelbourne was asked to designate two other judges to hear the case, alleging that only a three-judge panel could deal with the issue of constitutionality of law. To avoid this delaying tactic, the NAACP withdrew its request to declare the Day Law unconstitutional. On October 27, 1950, Shelbourne signed a summary judgment that allowed blacks to enter Paducah Junior College. Immediately upon this announcement, the University of Louisville announced that it too would admit blacks to both graduate and undergraduate programs.

The requirement that the college admit blacks while the Day Law was still in effect posed a dilemma for Matheson and the trustees. The decision was made to take the case to its ultimate conclusion: "We carried it three steps. We almost went one more," recalled Matheson. However, the Brown decision ended the dispute. The "integration went rather smoothly once it became legally possible for you to admit them [African-American students]. In the interim the State of Kentucky actually changed the Day Law while the Court was making final disposition of the case against PJC."³³

Matheson, speaking for the college, wrote to many Southern colleges "explaining to them that the litigation was a test case and asked them to contribute financially to keep it in the courts. Without exception they replied that it was strictly Paducah Junior College's fight, and not theirs."³⁴

The college got a temporary stay when both Wilson and Powell were drafted into the Army. However, Freeland appeared

on June 8, 1951, with Marion Wilson and Eloise Broady Ray and requested they be admitted. Matheson examined their credentials [Miss Wilson had already completed two years at Kentucky State College, and Miss Ray had graduated from Lincoln High School in Paducah in 1947]. They met all existing qualifications. Matheson reported that "we feel that we are obligated to obey the modified Day School Law." It would appear that the issue was resolved, but, according to Murrell, the board of the college remained obdurate about blanket acceptance of black applicants for admission. Upon advice from Robert Carter of the NAACP, Freeland returned to Federal District Court to get an injunction to compel admission of blacks.³⁵

An injunction was granted January 22, 1952. This action satisfied the city, but not the college:

Two days later the Dean and trustees made application to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit at Cincinnati, Ohio, to review the case. On January 25, the District Court granted a stay of the summary judgment and a suspension of the injunction for the duration of the appeal.

On February 3, 1953, the court upheld Judge Shelbourne's decision without comment. No action was taken to declare the segregation law unconstitutional. The college did not take the case to the United State Supreme Court, so, on June 9, 1953, four blacks registered for the summer session. Paducah Junior College was desegregated: "Negroes mingled with the whites in extra-curricular activities, they swam in the college's indoor swimming pool along with their classmates, and they engaged in horseshoe pitching and other forms of recreation."³⁶ The only

problem that emerged during the year was a question of where to hold a picnic. The city of Paducah refused the use of Noble Park since both black and white students would attend as equals, so Dr. Matheson arranged for the event to take place at Massac Park at Metropolis, Illinois. When the United States Supreme Court ruled on May 17, 1954, that segregation was unconstitutional, Paducah Junior College was already integrated and had served as a model for others in Kentucky and elsewhere.

The GI bill produced a rapid growth in the demand for college experience across the nation. Paducah Junior College had to grow. The funds from the Rosenthal bequest, the War Memorial Fund, and a \$2,500 gift from the Paducah Lions Club formed the basis for the expansion of the structure at 707 Broadway. A cornerstone was laid on April 18, 1951, for a much-needed annex of four first-floor classrooms in addition to two restrooms, offices for faculty, the Registrar and President. The second story contained two science laboratories, a restroom, and a dressing room adjacent to the gymnasium. The rest of the space contain a multipurpose auditorium seating 300. 37

The new space was readied in time for the rapid influx following passage of the GI bill for veterans of the Korean conflict. It also was time for the college to seek independent accreditation. The University of Kentucky notified the college in the spring of 1953 that it would no longer affirm accreditation. Matheson had anticipated this and had been sending annual reports to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for two years with requests for admission into that regional accreditation organization. On October 15,

1953, a committee co-chaired by Drs. Irvin Ingram and D. M. Nelson arrived in Paducah to evaluate the college. Immediately the team protested the lack of library accommodations. Because the more critical of the two--Dr. Ingram--was forced for personal reasons to leave the committee, the college received a fair hearing that involved many in the community testifying before the committee. However, before he left, Dr. Ingram told Matheson that he believed the association would accept the college if the trustees would establish a library and employ a certified librarian. He also encouraged the Dean to take a delegation to Memphis and plead his case directly to the association.³⁸ The proximity of the Carnegie Library, which was just across the street, proved to be a blessing. The college trustees met with the board of the library and arrived at a mutually beneficial arrangement--the college would build a second floor within the existing structure that would be dedicated to the use of the college. Miss Fay Champion, a retired librarian, agreed to head the new service.

Matheson and seven trustees pled the college's case before the committee of the accreditation commission at Memphis. Matheson pressed for immediate admission, noting that the criteria of the University of Kentucky under which Paducah Junior College had been accredited was the same as that of the Southern Association. The response was not promising. Matheson pointed out that it would hurt the college to operate a year without accreditation and reminded the committee that since he had sent annual reports for the past two years, he was now asking for a waiver. Matheson's argument prevailed and the college was accepted as a member of the Southern Association of

Colleges and Secondary Schools on December 4, 1953. 39

Enrollment at Paducah Junior College reached a record 407 in the fall of 1957 and promised to continue to increase in the foreseeable future. Matheson summed up his views of the prospects for two-year colleges in a message in 1959. Bulging enrollments placed increasing burdens on the tax base for publicly supported institutions. As Matheson wryly noted, "A great many people have facetiously remarked that the 'higher' in education was referring to the cost." To Matheson, this was an opportunity for the two-year schools: "To help solve this problem for thousands of young men and young women throughout the nation, the community college has stepped in to offer its services. Paducah Junior College is a pioneer in the South in offering the services of a community college to its surrounding territory." The community college was both economical and convenient; however, "cheap education would be extremely expensive if it were not of a high quality. Paducah Junior College offers curricula...and credit courses...which are comparable to those found anywhere."40

Enrollment continued to grow throughout the 1960s. Since the location at 707 Broadway lacked further potential for expansion, the college officials began to plan for relocation: "Before moving to the present site, the college looked at several different sites." One plot containing fifty-seven acres was located near Noble Park on the northwest side of town. Neither site had the potential of that on the west end of highway U.S. 62 or Blandville Road.41

In 1960 the college employed Dr. A. Grant Morrison, a specialist from the United States Office of Education, to do a

feasibility study on sites in Paducah and McCracken County near the city. Following closely on Morrison's report, William Carson, manager of the Coca Cola Bottling Company, offered to sell his home and thirty-one acres for a paltry \$75,000--a figure far below the market value. This site fitted the guidelines of the Morrison report. The trustees and Matheson also contacted property owners adjacent to the site and got their agreement for an additional twenty acres at \$1,000 an acre. The only snag was that the site was 1,500 feet outside the city bounds.42

Resistance to the proposed relocation developed. Could the college continue to receive city tax support at the new site? Roy Vance, chairman of the trustees, asked the city attorney to get a ruling. There was no precedent in Kentucky law, so Warren Middleton, Corporation Counsel for Paducah, took the question to the McCracken County Circuit Court and got a favorable ruling from Judge C. Warren Eaton. Still, the issue remained in doubt. Stanley Petter, owner of property between the site and the city limit, asked for an injunction, but was refused. To end the uncertainty, the city annexed the property on March 28, 1961.43

The future location of the college was assured, especially since the school had recently received \$162,000 from the sale of its old Magnavox plant on October 31, 1961. The only remaining obstacle was to gain further revenue from taxes. To that end, the state legislature had passed enabling legislation in 1960 that allowed second class cities to create support districts that included the county in which the school was located. The city of Paducah complied with the new possibility by agreeing to

include the county into a support district for the benefit of the college. It was left to the voters in the November election to determine the fate of the school.⁴⁴

If passed, the city rates on real estate would rise from a maximum of seven percent to fourteen percent. The same rates would also apply to county residents; however, these out-of-town county residents would actually be agreeing to an increase from zero to a maximum of fourteen percent per hundred dollar evaluation.

The college mustered support to get the measure approved. Dr. Matheson and Howard Hill sent a personal letter to each alumnus asking for help in the election. In addition, four alumni served as the Paducah Junior College Expansion Committee. Despite these efforts, the measure failed by seventy votes in the city and 462 in the county. However, Matheson refused to let the issue die and vowed to conduct a more effective campaign in 1962.⁴⁵

The failure of the support district was offset, in part, by action of the state legislature. On August 8, 1962, the Council on Public Higher Education entered into a contract with the publicly supported junior college at Paducah. Under this agreement Paducah Junior College was to provide occupational training leading either to a degree or employment, for which it would receive \$200 per fulltime student per semester. A total of \$45,000 was made available for the next two years.⁴⁶

Matheson got approval from the board of trustees to employ Mrs. Jean Garrison as the campaign chairman. When Dean took the issue to the students also, they agreed to form visitation teams to assure that all parts of the city and county would be

informed on the question of a support district for the college. Much of the credit for the successful campaign rests with Glenn Murrell, instructor in history and political science, and with the student steering committees. The willingness of students to devote their time and effort to a project that promised nothing for their own further education is a credit to their sense of community. The measure passed handily.⁴⁷

Upon the recommendation of Matheson, the board of trustees employed Dr. Kenneth Skaggs, vice president in charge of campus expansion and development at St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida. His report became the basis for the development of a campus plan that was given to Lee Potter Smith Associates, architects. The city passed an ordinance allowing the college to sell bonds to construct the new campus. J.J.B. Hilliard and Sons of Louisville acted as fiscal agent in the sale of \$1,350,000 in revenue bonds. A special account was set up to pay off the bonds from student fees, which were raised. Registration fees increased from \$12.50 to \$25.00 and class fees from \$72.00 to \$100.00 for up to eighteen semester hours.⁴⁸

Matheson was fortunate to have Royce Gregory as his business officer and vice president during this period. His expertise in finance and banking proved to be vital. Also, Gregory had experience in the supervision of a major construction effort. Much of the day-to-day oversight of the construction of the new campus on Blandville Road fell to Gregory.

While much of Dean Matheson's time during the 1950s and the 1960s was occupied with the college and its problems, he still found occasion to contribute to his community. In the 1950s,

Matheson helped resolve the plethora of labor disputes that threatened the construction of both the gaseous diffusion plant and the TVA Shawnee steam plant. For the remainder of his life, he maintained with pride his status as a federal arbitrator. Further, Matheson was instrumental in founding the McCracken Mental Health Association and the Bear Creek Council of Girl Scouts. Not only did the Dean serve as president of these organizations; he also occupied the office for the Family Services Society for thirty-six years. He also headed the Southeast Community College Athletic Association and the Kentucky Athletics Association. He also served on the board of the Southern Association of Junior Colleges between 1964 and 1968. The Kentucky State Medical Association gave Matheson its Barr Award, and he was listed in Who's Who in American Education. Presbyterian College awarded Matheson its Golden P award as an outstanding alumni. Somehow too, Matheson managed his busy schedule to meet all attendance requirements for his membership in the Rotary Club in Paducah.⁴⁹

Murrell's history continues: "In 1963, Paducah Junior College [was] rated sixth in total enrollment among the twenty-seven collegiate institutions in Kentucky and first among the ten junior colleges."⁵⁰ While the new campus was under construction, Matheson had to plan for the move to the new site on Blandville Road and dispose of the old facility while completing a self-study for re-accreditation. Broadway Methodist Church next door acquired the old building at 707 Broadway.

In 1963, Matheson arranged to fly the steering committee for the self-study to Atlanta. This decision received recognition from the association since the college had the

largest delegation there. The Dean's foresight proved beneficial to the success of the report. As a result of the self-study, the college hired Robert L. Robertson to act as the school's first Director of Student Personnel with the responsibility to initiate a new guidance program. Robertson held a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree from the University of Kentucky and had previously been employed as the principal of the high school at Springfield, Kentucky. Another innovation was the decision to start an associate degree program in nursing that would allow graduates to sit for licensure as registered nurses. Barbara Tescher, who held a Master's in nursing from the University of Maryland, assumed the direction of this program. Finally, the faculty organized into the Faculty Assembly, headed by Carlton Williams, an instructor in history. The college also divided into administrative divisions with Mary Yeiser overseeing fine arts; Howard Hill, heading business and commerce; and Richard Price, heading not only communications, but also serving as Registrar. Dr. Charles Smith chaired the science division. Coach Claude Haws served both as Dean of Men as well as head of the physical education division. Glen Murrell directed the social science and education faculty. Susan Price was Dean of Women. It was time to move.

Paducahans opened the third section of their Sunday Paducah Sun to see Ed Kimbrell's headline, "Come To See Us Today, Says PJC." More than a thousand people attended the dedication of the new campus on April 4, 1965. Dr. John Oswald, President of the University of Kentucky, spoke in the new gymnasium and took the occasion to announce that the University would welcome Paducah Junior College into its fledgling community college system

created by the legislature in 1962. Oswald pointed out that the University "stands ready to make the maximum effort to help all communities," but any step to include PJC in the community college concept "must come from the local community with the whole support of that community." This announcement caught the attention of many. Oswald continued, [Paducah Junior College] "represents the pioneer public junior college in Kentucky, a fact that distinguishes this community among its sister cities."⁵¹

Later, former Governor Bert Combs appeared and joined the guests on the platform. Combs acknowledged that

the length and shadow of Paducah Junior College is Dr. Matheson. He came to Frankfort (along with a delegation) to seek funds for PJC. I was pleased to make it possible to give a little assistance to this college. You are the leader of community colleges in Kentucky.

Combs referred to the trip of Matheson, Paducahan Chief Justice Brady Stewart of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, and Fred Paxton of WPSD-TV who met with Combs on January 15, 1962. The account in The Sun the next day implied that the purpose of the trip was to bring the college into the UK system. Matheson denied that this was the intent, or at least it was not his intent.

Matheson noted that few students from Paducah Junior College matriculated at the University of Kentucky: "The University of Kentucky is too far away. Its curriculum is not what Western Kentucky people need. Most of our graduates go to Murray State or Southern Illinois or Vanderbilt." He also pointed out that many experts in junior college education stressed as much local

control as possible was desirable.⁵²

The commissioners of the city of Paducah asked the Paducah-McCracken County Development Council to study the matter and report. Fantus, Incorporated, of New York City made the study, and their report focused on the lack of reliable funding for future expansion to meet growing student demand. The report also stressed that the area needed a unique institution to meet local needs. The conclusion was that the most logical alternative at the moment was to merge with the University of Kentucky but retain a degree of local autonomy, particularly over new programs needed in the Paducah area. Matheson was not convinced. Nevertheless, the city arranged for a joint committee from the commission, the college, and the Development Council to meet with representatives from the university. At a meeting June 12, 1964, the University of Kentucky welcomed Paducah Junior College as a prospective member of their system and hoped to use the school at Paducah as a model for others to emulate.⁵³

Matheson still was not convinced that the merger was in the best interest of the college at Paducah. Upon his recommendation, the trustees arranged for Dr. C. H. Lawsche to conduct a study. This report affirmed the desirability of merger, pointing out that teaching loads of eighteen semester hours per full-time faculty member were too high, salaries were below national averages, and further growth would dissuade qualified teachers from remaining at Paducah Junior College.⁵⁴

A third report was authorized jointly by the city and county governments. Dr. Jesse E. Hopson of Heald, Hopson and Associates of New York presented his report to the trustees at

their January 5, 1966 meeting and affirmed the earlier views on growth, predicting the college would lose its accreditation if it did not receive an additional \$100,000 per year over the next two years. This information was further justification for agreeing to the merger; however, Matheson issued a statement to the local press on January 6 denying that the college faced the possibility of losing its accreditation. He noted that the college was receiving additional patronage and would restrict enrollment and increase fees. The Dean felt that the report expressed possibilities, not probabilities. The trustees followed up at the February 14 meeting with an increase in tuition, fees, and surcharges on out-of-county students. Still, the institution was at its saturation point in that now each additional student would add more to cost than to revenue. Additional funding was critical, and the recent entry of the federal government into funding programs in higher education, particularly for developing institutions, turned Matheson and the college toward Washington for succor. However, the Dean lacked the time and expertise needed to deal with the federal Office of Education and its requirements, so he turned to Murray State College for assistance. The result was a pioneer project under Title III. Dr. Ralph Woods of Murray State arranged for Dr. Donald J. Clemens to come to Paducah during 1966-67 to assist in writing a grant proposal under Title III, Developing Institutions. Clemens was to act as academic dean as well. The presence of Clemens on campus also was a public affirmation of the close working association that existed between Paducah Junior College and Murray State at a time when powerful forces in Paducah and McCracken County were urging merger with the

University of Kentucky.55

Dr. John Oswald returned to Paducah to support the idea of merger on February 4. The Paducah daily newspaper reported that Oswald was particularly interested in keeping the unique feature of Paducah Junior College--the city-county tax base. By doing so, Paducah could serve as a model for the other community colleges of the University of Kentucky. (Only Ashland had a similar tax.) Oswald's invitation pleased many in Paducah, and they began a plan for merger.

Ed Kimbrell reported developments on page one of the Sunday edition of The Paducah Sun Democrat on February 6, 1966. According to this reporter, State Rep. Julian Carroll had said, "It appears that PJC should consider a move to UK only if it is a gain for the local college; that is, only if UK is willing to finance our academic program here and leave the tax program funds to give vocational and other specialized training at PJC. Any plan should maintain local autonomy over our local tax." Representative Carroll was also supported by Representative Fred Morgan and Senator Tom Garrett.56

Kimbrell also noted that the chairman of the college trustees, Roy Vance, felt that the college had either to go with the University of Kentucky or Murray State or win funds directly from the state to survive. While a working relationship with Murray was already in place, Dean Matheson and some of the trustees hesitated to turn to a relatively unknown relationship with Lexington. Many in the community disagreed.

On February 9, the city commission unanimously urged that Paducah Junior College link itself with the University of Kentucky. The commissioners cited the Lawsche study as

justification for their action and urged the college officials to initiate dialogue with a goal of merger.⁵⁷

At the request of the University of Kentucky, the legislature agreed to consider the merger proposal. The measure was introduced simultaneously in both chambers to save time. Fred Morgan and Julian Carroll sponsored the bill in the House while Tom Garrett saw it through the Senate. The measure became Kentucky Revised statute 164.593. The measures guaranteed the University of Kentucky would get any federal or state funds coming to Paducah Junior College, but use of tax funds was left to the local board. Negotiations began in earnest.

The local board would retain ownership of the property unless the university built a new structure. In that event, the property would be deeded to the university. The name of the school had to change from Paducah Junior College to Paducah Community College, but the existing athletic program would remain and be paid for by local funds.⁵⁸

Liaison committees from both institutions mulled over draft proposals for the merger. In the interim, a Paducah college trustee approached officials at Murray State. The two institutions had a working relationship based upon the Title III fund request that placed Murray State as the supporting school to aid in the development of Paducah Junior College. To many, like the Dean, this seemed to be a logical alternative since approximately seventy percent of the graduates of the college at Paducah went on to Murray State, which, according to an item in the Paducah daily on February 10, 1966, had just received university status. According to Tom Waller, the only trustee to serve continuously from 1932 the Board of Paducah Junior College,

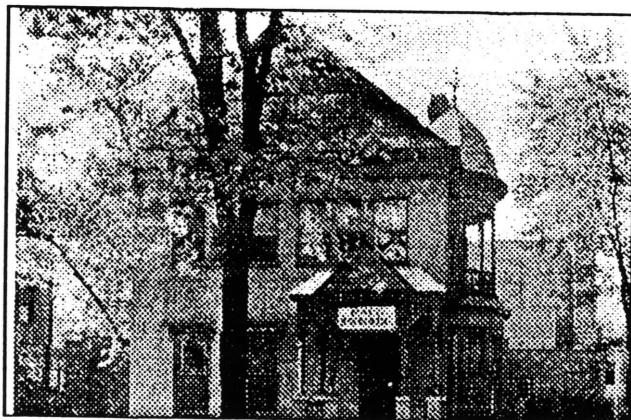
Dr. Ralph Woods, president of Murray State University, had affirmed that he would do everything in his power to help Paducah Junior College. Perhaps as much as \$100,000 in federal aid was forthcoming for the next year, and the Murray State President would ask the state legislature for a per capita allowance if he was requested to by the PJC board at Paducah.⁵⁹

Supporters of merger gathered community support. A letter from T. A. Paxton, Manager of Claussner's Hosiery Mill, to G. Leon Williams of the Paducah Junior College Board dated May 9, 1967, assured that local funds would be available if the merger endangered the federal grant monies. Williams entered this information into the minutes of the PJC trustees. The implication was that nothing was to stand in the way of the proposed merger. Still, Waller, Dr. Leon Higdon, and the Dean had deep and abiding reservations.

The trustees meeting held May 11 saw the proponents of the merger push passage. Waller raised the obstacle to future expectations of being a four-year institution. Jack Rottgering then read an article from the local newspaper quoting Henry Ward as saying that the merger would not hinder the junior college from becoming a senior institution upon merger. In fact, he felt that this might be the most expedient route to that goal. John Russell, a Paducah banker, assured the trustees that merger promised the brightest financial future for the college at Paducah. After discussion, the measure was put to a vote with the decision resting on a telegraphed vote from Judge Brady Stewart, one of the founders of the college. There was discussion over procedure as to whether or not an absentee ballot was permissible under the by-laws of the board. The

ballot was opened and the fate of the college was sealed--it would merge into the Community College System of the University of Kentucky.⁶⁰

Paducah Junior College was to operate jointly with UK during 1967-68 and be incorporated into the university system for 1968-69. On February 7, 1968, Dr. Robert Gordon Matheson, President, submitted his resignation to the trustees of Paducah Junior College effective on June 30, 1968. He was past the mandatory retirement age for administrators in the state's university system. His letter summarized his thirty-two years at Paducah by expressing his gratitude toward the trustees, the community, the faculty, and the students.⁶¹



Paducah Junior College
707 Broadway

ENDNOTES

1Janett Blythe, "PCC, Community Lose 'Dean,'" The Paducah Sun, Tuesday, December 17, 1991, p. 1. "We pallbearers loaded the casket in the hearse. Separating, we took our assigned places in the cars only to be called back. It seemed that the hearse had a dead battery. Former coach and athletic director Claude 'Sonny' Haws, Professor Jim Womble, and I agreed that it was only fitting that it took two tries to get the Dean to the cemetery. He loved life to the fullest."

2Glenn Cochrum, "R. G. Matheson: Two Years for 'Dean' will Total 32 when He Retires From PJC Presidency," The Paducah Sun-Democrat, February 11, 1968, pp. B1, B10.

3Matheson had to leave Paducah Junior College in 1968 when it merged with the University of Kentucky Community College System since he was beyond the mandatory retirement age of sixty-five for administrators. He served as a consultant to the new two-year college system until completion of its first self-study for accreditation by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges in 1972-73. Returning to Paducah, Matheson taught psychology until he reached the mandatory retirement age of seventy for faculty that prevailed at that time in the University of Kentucky. After that, he taught without pay until 1976 as a volunteer faculty emeritus.

4Jana Mansfield, "Dean Matheson Pioneered PCC," The Signal, Vol. XVII, November 21, January 29, 1992, pp. 1, 7-8.

5John E. L. Robertson. "Paducah Junior College." The Kentucky Encyclopedia. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1992, p. 796. The original tuition was one hundred dollars a semester at PJC while it was only forty-seven dollars at the University of Kentucky. The teachers' college at Murray, Kentucky, charged twenty-eight dollars per semester. (The latter was only seven years old at the time and is located forty miles from Paducah.) Paducah Junior College graduated a class of eight in 1933, including Murray Rogers, the inventor of an electrical duplicator, who was awarded the first diploma. Previously, Rogers had attended Hope College.

In addition to Bell, the faculty consisted of Dr. Henry Pepper, political science; Norman Braden, physical science; Vera Moore, foreign languages; Phillip Eugene LaRowe, music; Dr. Emily Calcott, English and dean of women; and Curtis Sanders, athletics.

6Glenn Austin Murrell, A History of Paducah Junior College, 1932-1968, Master's thesis at Murray State University, 1968, reporting an interview of Mrs. Joseph Rosenthal, nee Vera Moore, one of the first PJC faculty in interview August 1, 1967, at Jackson, Tennessee, where she was teaching foreign languages at Lambuth College.

As the years passed, "more and more responsibilities were being turned over to me. And when I came back from the Navy in 1946 we had to have contracts with the government to educate the G.I.'s that came back. Everytime I had to sign one I had to get

the secretary of the board to certify that I was the Chief Executive Officer, so they just made me president." See Paula Alexander, "Dean Matheson Recalls Past Years," The Signal of Paducah Community College, September 26, 1984, p. 4.

7"History of PJC," five-part video series by television department of Paducah Community College, Paducah, Kentucky, 1985. Part I, Interview of Dr. Robert Gordon Matheson by John E. L. Robertson. Many in Paducah thought Matheson's first name was "Dean" because the title became so closely associated with him.

Dr. Doak S. Campbell and Dr. Leonard Koos of the University of Chicago visited Paducah to advise the proposed trustees of the new college. Upon their recommendation the decision was made to go ahead with the project at the April 24 meeting of the Board in 1932. See Carolyn Davis, "1930's--PCC's First 10 Turbulent Years," in The Signal, Vol. XVII, Golden Anniversary Edition, May 9, 1982, p. 2.

8Paula Alexander, "Dean Matheson Recalls Past Years," The Signal, September 26, 1984, p. 4. Matheson recalled that "there were more girls than boys. I believe there were 15 girls and 11 boys. And all the boys belonged to a local fraternity."

9Murrell, op. cit., pp. 28-38.

10Cochrum, op. cit., p. B1. The tale of the pool is one I heard on many occasions from the Dean.

11Video interview with Matheson by the author, op. cit.

12 Ibid.

13Video interview with Matheson, op. cit. When the Dean came back, the water had come just to the instrument board. The wiring and the starter of the vehicle were not damaged. Matheson also related that the weather was unusually cold, causing many automobiles to freeze; thus, abandoned vehicles were left to the rising waters where they continued to pose a threat to passing boats throughout the flood. A movie by the TVA shows a boat moving along Broadway, and one can see the roofs of derelict vehicles as they rise and fall with the passing wake. By January 23, the local newspaper estimated that over 3,000 automobiles were stranded in the downtown area. See The Paducah Sun-Democrat, July 26, 1956, Centennial Edition, p. 30B.

14 Ibid.

15Murrell, op. cit., p. 41; The Paducah Sun-Democrat, January 21, 1937, p. 2.

16Carolyn Davis, "1930's-PCC's First 10 Turbulent Years," The Signal, Golden Anniversary Edition dated Sunday, May 9, 1982, p. 2. See Murrell, op. cit., p. 44 for the episode concerning the furnace.

17Murrell, op. cit., p. 45. In 1935 a few classes had been offered to employees of the Illinois Central Railroad by Dean Norman Braden, but there was no regular program in the evening. Howard Hill became a long-serving member of the faculty. The total expended on the program was \$1,750, and a total of twenty people participated.

18Murrell, op. cit., p. 46. The college had disseminated a preliminary announcement for the 1932-33 school year promising such courses. Ralph Steele taught the first of these courses at PJC. The equipment needed represented a substantial cost plus the fact that one room on the second floor had to be refurbished.

19 Ibid., p. 48. The Committee on Accreditation Relations of the University of Kentucky served as the accrediting agency for PJC.

20Donna Groves and Nathan Yancy. "Forties Reflect W.W. II," The Signal.

21Murrell, op. cit., p. 50 citing interview with Dr. Henry Tatter, October 5, 1966. Tatter was appointed Acting Dean after Matheson reported for duty in the navy.

22Video interview, op. cit.

23Groves and Yancy. The Signal, Golden Anniversary Edition, Sunday, May 2, 1982, p. 3.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. Matheson did return on leave so that he could speak at the commencement exercises in June of 1944.

26Murrell, op. cit., pp. 52-53, citing the previously noted interview with Tatter and a later interview with R. G. Matheson. The latter took place September 14, 1967.

27Groves and Yancy. "Forties Reflect W.W. II," The Signal, May 9, 1982, Golden Anniversary Edition, p. 3.

28 Ibid., pp. 79-80. Rosenthal had been the president of the National Wholesale Dry Goods Institute at the time of his death. Four days later, Harry Rimer, secretary of the organization, notified the college that the Institute had started a drive among its members to raise funds toward a new building for the school in honor of Rosenthal. The drive ended on May 21, 1950, and the school received a check for \$10,000.

29 Ibid.

30Murrell, op. cit., p. 58. This is an excellent treatment of this important case that helped end segregation in Kentucky.

31 Ibid., Chapter IV, "Desegregation," pp. 55-76. Section 187 of the Kentucky Constitution of 1891 forbade instruction of

Negroes and Caucasians in the same school. In 1904 Representative Carl Day of Breathitt County introduced the Day School Law that declared, "No colored person may attend any college, school or institution where white persons are received as pupils or receive instruction." Failure to follow this mandate would bring a fine of \$1,000 per day upon the institution and \$50 per day on each teacher and student until they complied under KRS 158.020.

32Video History of PJC, op. cit. Murrell, op. cit., p. 60 reports that Freeland, the attorney for the NAACP, asked the court "to declare the rights of the parties with respect to the controversy, adjudge that the refusal of the college to admit colored students deprived them of equal protection of the law, declare the Day School law unconstitutional, rule that Wilson, Powell, and others similarly situated had the right to enter Paducah Junior College and permanently enjoin and restrain the school from enforcing an invalid state law." The suit cited the City of Paducah, R. G. Matheson, Dean of Paducah Junior College, Brady Stewart, Schultz Riggs, John G. Russell, T. S. Waller, W. A. Conway, B. G. Kreuger, Luther Carson, Leon Higdon, Samuel H. Finkel, trustees, and Stewart Johnston, Mayor of Paducah, an ex officio member of the board.

33Video History of PJC, op. cit. In 1950 the legislature amended the Day Law permitting "the co-education of white and Negro students in public or private schools above the high school level, providing the governing authorities of the institution elect to do so, and providing that an equal, complete and accredited course is not available at the Kentucky State College for Negroes." See Revised Statues of Kentucky, 1950, Section 158.021.

34Murrell, op. cit., p. 70, quoting Howard Hill, then Chairman of the Commerce Division of Paducah Junior College, October 3, 1967.

35 Ibid., p. 71. The Matheson quotation is reported by Murrell as being in a letter from Joseph Freeland to Robert Carter, June 10, 1951. Letter is in the Freeland MSS. This development allegedly came from a chance meeting of Freeland and the Dean where they spoke candidly with each other on the dispute.

36 Ibid., p. 75.

37Perhaps the trustees were a bit ashamed that they had not built a new structure--at least they had not placed a plaque on the addition honoring either veterans or Rosenthal. See Murrell, op. cit., p. 81.

38Murrell, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

39 Ibid., citing interview with Matheson on September 19, 1967.

40Danny Logan, "PJC Moves to New Building in '50's," The Signal, Golden Anniversary Edition, May 9, 1982, p. 5.

41Sara Burrows. "Sixties Bring Merger with UK," The Signal Golden Anniversary Edition, May 9, 1982, p. 5.

42Murrell, op. cit., pp. 85-87. William Carson made his offer on September 1, 1960. The Carson family, especially the founder of the bottling works, Luther Carson, were strong supporters of the college.

43 Ibid., p. 86, citing item in The Paducah Sun-Democrat, August 23, 1961.

44 Ibid., p. 87, 88. For the enabling act, see Revised Statutes of Kentucky 1960, Sec. 165.170.

45 Ibid., p. 89. For results of election, see The Paducah Sun-Democrat, November 8, 1961, p. 1. A total of 3,102 voted in Paducah and 5,630 in McCracken County. The college got approximately one third of its students from the county at that time.

46 Ibid.

47The Paducah Sun-Democrat, November 8, 1962, p. 1. The city vote was 4,802 for increasing local tax support and 1,444 in opposition. The county carried the measure easily this time with a margin of 1,617.

48Murrell, op. cit., pp. 90, 91. The city commissioners passed the ordinance to raise fees on December 12, 1963.

49Blythe, op. cit., p. 2A. In 1962, the Rotary Club awarded Matheson its Rotary Wheel Award for 55 years of "Service Above Self."

50Murrell, op. cit., p. 93, quoting a report to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for 1964-1965.

51In the TV history of PJC, Dr. Matheson recalled the event. While working with the Community College System as a consultant, Matheson learned that Dr. Ellis Hartford, Dean of the Community Colleges, had written the speech Oswald was to give; However, "Dr. Oswald had gotten half way through the speech and...motivated by something that had been said, threw away the speech and made up his own. In that he stated that the University of Kentucky, while not exerting any pressure of any kind, would be delighted to have Paducah Junior College come into the Community College System." The timing of the announcement was good since Governor Bert Combs was there to honor the college but not to speak. However, he remarked after Oswald's speech: "Now, I want you people down here to listen to what Dr. Oswald has said. He has welcomed you into the Community College System. If I know Dr. Oswald, that means that eventually you will be in the Community College System."

52"Dean Would Turn Down 'Crippling' Curbs on College," The Paducah Sun-Democrat, January 16, 1962, p. 1.

The suggestion to merge with the University of Kentucky was that of Representative Fred Morgan, who advanced the idea in 1956. At that time it had little support in Paducah. Morgan broached the idea again in 1962 after a hearing of the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives. See The Paducah Sun-Democrat, January 11, 1962, p. 1.

53Murrell, op. cit., citing the minutes of the PJC-UK liaison committee in the college files.

54Lawsche was Dean of Extension at Purdue University. As dire as were Lawsche's projections, the actual enrollment in 1967 exceeded his expectations. The report reached the trustees October 15, 1965.

55Clemens was offered the position of dean at the meeting of the college board on April 20. He was on a leave of absence from Murray at the time. In part, Matheson opposed the merger for personal reasons. The University of Kentucky required administrators to retire at age sixty-five. Matheson was sixty-six at the time. As it turned out, the university offered to hire Matheson as a consultant on the accreditation process for the community college system.

56Julian Carroll was graduate of both Heath High School in McCracken County and of Paducah Junior College. Carroll completed his law degree at the University of Kentucky and taught part-time for PJC in its night program. Later, he became the Speaker of the House and worked with Wendell Ford to accomplish the most far-reaching reform of the legislative process in the present century. Following that, he served as Lieutenant Governor and Governor of Kentucky. Carroll also served on the Board of Trustees of Paducah Junior College and the Advisory Board of the Paducah Community College.

57Minutes, Board of Commissioners of Paducah, February 7, 1966. Also see The Paducah Sun-Democrat, p. 1A for the same date.

58Paducah Junior College had a long tradition in fielding quality teams in both basketball and baseball. Immediately after its merger with UK, other community colleges began programs, particularly in basketball. The college at Paducah won the national championship in junior college basketball in 1969, the first year it was officially Paducah Community College. Now athletics have waned across the entire system. PCC discontinued participation in intercollegiate sports some while ago.

59The letter of Dr. Woods to Mr. Waller is dated February 6, and Mr. Waller's recommendation to the Board is dated February 7. Both are contained in the minutes for the board meeting held on February 7, 1967. In particular, Waller argued that merger with the University of Kentucky would end any possibility for PCC's becoming a four-year school at some later date. See page four of his letter.

60The best summary of this vote is in Murrell, op. cit., pp. 109-114. The Minutes of the board are spare in content. Mr. Murrell interviewed the participants and included their memories into his treatment of the event.

61In May of 1991, the University of Kentucky presented Dr. Matheson the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for outstanding contribution to education. Matheson summed up his career at Paducah Junior College as follows: "Nobody knows better than I how much I owe my success to other people. Time after time, the right man has been at the right place at the right time, either on the board of trustees, in the community, or on my staff, to make a major contribution to Paducah Junior College and its advancement." See Blythe, op. cit.



"The Dcan"
Dr. Robert Gordon Matheson
1900-1991